STATEMENT
delivered by

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On behalf of the Member States of CARICOM

at the

United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Madame President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARICOM congratulates you, Madame President on your election to guide the work of this critically important Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. We express our confidence in your ability to steer our work to a successful conclusion and pledge our support to you in this regard.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statement delivered by El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

This conference is faced with an historic task, as we meet to begin our efforts to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. We are here to finally advance discussions with the objective of filling the legal gap that currently exists regarding the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, including the general regulation and prohibition against possession, use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of such weapons.

We all can recall the optimism and determination that we felt as the majority of governments voted to start working on this treaty. We further recall the momentum that has been growing particularly in light of the stirring humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Any assessment of the humanitarian impact provides unassailable proof that nuclear weapons cause loss of life and displacement on a catastrophic scale with permanent damage to health and the environment, and irreparable impediment to socioeconomic development and to the social order. These humanitarian impacts must remain at the forefront of our efforts because the risk of catastrophic consequences will remain as long as nuclear weapons exist. CARICOM states reaffirm our commitment to this process and pledge to work to maintain this momentum as the global community seeks to ensure adequate action to prohibit nuclear weapons so that no state or community has to grapple with the devastation that would be caused by nuclear weapon detonation.

Madame President,

CARICOM Member States stand with the rest of the world as we are aware of the unparalleled harm and destruction that nuclear weapons can pose to humankind. We therefore have a long-standing policy of total elimination of nuclear weapons in line with the three pillars of the Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons NPT, namely disarmament, non-proliferation, and guarantees of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.
CARICOM's commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is further embodied in the participation of all its Member States the treaty of Tlatelolco, which in turn established the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). It is a source of satisfaction and pride to CARICOM Member States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean and stands as the world's first nuclear weapons free zone in a densely populated region. We are even more proud to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Moreover, our commitment to a nuclear weapon free world is in keeping with the Special Declarations on the Commitment to advance Multilateral Negotiations on Nuclear Disarmament which was adopted by Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

It is our view that Nuclear weapons free zones have been central to reinforcing commitments made by Member States and their establishment has laid a strong foundation of high standards can be reinforced and strengthened in our work in this conference.

In terms of collaboration, we acknowledge the role of civil society for their ongoing support in this endeavor and we encourage further work in this regard.

Madame President,

CARICOM continues to argue that nuclear weapons have no utility in today's world. They are not useful deterrents but rather cultivate a state of insecurity and false defensiveness that only increases the chances of proliferation with devastating impact on all of us, far beyond the parties directly involved in conflict. Particularly, as small island developing states we are very aware that our strategic location, marine borders and socio-economic realities leave us as potential soft threats for nuclear terrorism. We are also concerned about the movement of hazardous waste and radioactive materials through our region.

CARICOM would like to re-state that the international security environment and the role of nuclear weapons in existing security doctrines must be fully considered. We must ensure that our work in this conference is based on that nuclear-armed States and other States working together. We must build bonds through meaningful and constructive dialogue and we also reaffirm that collective security is not mutually exclusive with national security, especially regarding nuclear weapons.

Madam President,
CARICOM would also like to emphasize the additional value in this conference of stigmatizing nuclear weapons, by raising consciousness of the devastating humanitarian impact; we can work to change international and public attitudes regarding policies and practices that form the basis of the acceptance of nuclear weapons.

In closing, we believe that the Conference can play a significant role in advancing the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda that has been stymied for such a significant period of time. We therefore have an important opportunity to ensure that we make the most of our discussions. CARICOM stands with the international community to make a commitment towards a world free of nuclear weapons in the best interest of all humanity. CARICOM remains steadfast in its commitment to constructively work towards this goal and urge all other Member States to do the same.